

1257796

# Assurance visit

## Information about this children's home

The home is owned by a private company. It is registered for up to 11 children who have ongoing mental health needs and present with challenging behaviours that may prevent them from functioning in the community without continued support.

There is a separately registered school on-site. The manager registered with Ofsted in December 2018.

**Visit dates:** 28 to 29 September 2020

**Previous inspection date:** 31 July 2019

**Previous inspection judgement:** Requires improvement to be good

## Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Findings from the visit**

We did not identify any serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

### **The care of children**

The children, staff and managers have responded to the issues arising from COVID-19 well. Children have continued to spend time with their families. The staff provide a balance of activities for children and help them to manage any anxiety linked to the pandemic.

Children's bedrooms are personalised. Significant work has taken place to reduce the institutional feel of the home. These improvements encourage children to feel comfortable and settled.

Managers ensure that the children have ample opportunities to share their views. An independent advocate regularly spends time with the children. This encourages children to participate in the running of the home.

Staff support the children's education. A child in the process of moving on from the home attended a new college placement. The staff provided transport despite the significant distance from the home. This support meant that the child was already settled in college when they arrived at the new home.

### **The safety of children**

The managers take the children's complaints seriously and respond to them in a formal and timely way. The staff seek children's feedback, and this leads to changes at the home.

The staff use physical restraints that are proportionate and keep the children safe. However, as with some other records, handwritten accounts are sometimes difficult to read. This makes some of the records difficult to monitor.

Managers have a good oversight of incidents at the home. They provide good follow-up with children through key-work sessions and one-to-one time. This encourages children to reflect on their behaviours and make changes.

The management team appropriately refers safeguarding incidents to the designated officer. However, the organisation's internal investigations are not always as thorough as they should be. This has the potential for aspects of an investigation to be missed.

The risk assessments are lengthy and at times read as a chronology. This can reduce the clarity of the information. One child's risk assessment failed to provide the staff with enough guidance to sufficiently reduce the associated risk.

## **Leaders and managers**

The management team has addressed the shortfalls identified at the last inspection. The team has expanded, giving senior managers more capacity to make improvements.

Managers identify areas for improvement and act. These actions include undertaking a ligature audit and implementing a new medication competency procedure and an agency induction process. These processes ensure that staff are prepared for their roles.

An independent visitor provides good-quality external monitoring that identifies areas for improvement. This monitoring has remained strong during lockdown.

The number of qualified and experienced staff has increased, and the use of agency staff has decreased. This provides greater opportunity for children to develop relationships with staff who are familiar with their needs.

Some external professionals gave positive feedback. One placing local authority reported recent improvements following some previous concerns.

## **What does the children's home need to do to improve?**

### **Recommendations**

- Ensure that risk assessments are clear and consistently provide staff with clarity regarding the arrangements in place to protect children and the steps they must take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 42, paragraph 9.5)
- Any allegation of harm or abuse must be addressed in line with the home's child protection policy. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 44, paragraph 9.17)

In particular, ensure that investigations assess and consider each element of the concern raised.

- Staff should be familiar with the home's policies on record keeping and understand the importance of careful, objective, and clear recording. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 62, paragraph 14.4)

In particular, ensure that any handwritten entries are clear and legible.

## Children's home details

**Unique reference number:** 1257796

**Registered provider:** Cambian Childcare Limited

**Registered provider address:** Cambian Childcare Limited, Metropolitan House, 3 Darkes Lane, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire EN6 1AG

**Responsible individual:** Michael Coleman

**Registered manager:** Alex Mitchell

## Inspectors

Ashley Hinson, Social Care Inspector  
Clive Lucas, Social Care Inspector  
Paula Edwards, Social Care Inspector

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